

**EXPECTATIONS AND REALITIES  
IN CONNECTION WITH THE  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF  
EASTERN CENTRAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES<sup>1</sup>**

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**EXPECTATIONS AND REALITIES CONCERNING THE ROLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL  
MOVEMENTS IN POLITICAL CHANGES**

1. Expectation: Since in Eastern Central European countries considerable masses engaged themselves in defense of the environment, both in the West and within Eastern Central European countries there was a hope that there are in those countries masses who think in a modern, environmentally conscious way.

1. Reality: Already at the time of revolutionary changes it became clear that the environment movement became so important in Eastern Central European countries only because this was the only -- quasi legitimate -- possibility for people to express their dissent towards the system. The moment an opportunity did arise for political movements and parties to develop, many people, who previously joined environmental movements, dispersed into different parties.

2. Expectation: There was yet another hope that the former activists of environmental movements who now had important roles at the larger parties could make these parties "green" -- and through the parties also government policy.

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2. Reality: The new parties needed a recognisable profile and therefore they searched for goals and characteristics which would differentiate them from the others. Environmental protection was inappropriate for this purpose since at the level of slogans everybody said the same thing -- everybody is for the protection of the environment. Before elections the environmental proposals of individual parties were much closer to one another than to the other parts of the economic strategy of those same parties. Interest was focused on questions lending themselves to confrontation and environmental problems remained marginal.

#### **EXPECTATIONS AND REALITIES AS TO PROBLEMS ARISING DURING THE CHANGE OF SYSTEM**

3. Expectation: There were several international environmental problems among former socialist countries which previously, during the era of controlled information, were totally suppressed, which were politically taboo. Besides the problem of international waterways and air contamination there were nuclear reactors located near borders, the use of border rivers and, in a broader sense, contamination at evacuated Soviet barracks as well. There was an assumption that mass publicity concerning such problems would enhance environmental thinking.

3. Reality: In relations between countries of the former Soviet bloc and among nationalities within them, national ideologies and different kinds of nationalism have been reinforced. Environmental conflicts have been submitted to this logic and acquired greater or smaller weight according to how they could be used as an argument in national disputes.

4. Expectation: There was a belief that, after the Western pattern, the desire for a better quality of life would have an important role in concentrating attention on the environment.

4. Reality. This tendencies has been oppressed by just opposite tendencies, as the focusing on material questions. For the poors it is the difficulties in the everyday life that do not let to unfold their demands for a better quality; while for the richer strata it is the new entrepreneurship that enforce their financial demands.

5. Expectation: Not only the above mentioned international informations, but generally the bigger freedom in getting informations gave a hope, that learning the real situation, people will demand larger care in relation towards our environment.

5. Reality. Just because of the more information-flow the louder and politically used information oppress the facts on our environment. It turned out, that the selection of the information is differs from those of expectations: to listen to the information on environment would need itself a certain previous consciousness towards our environment.

**EXPECTATIONS RELATIVE TO THE MYTH OF THE MARKET**

6.Expectation: A western, rather leftist hope relied on just the lack of the market in these countries: hoping that here there is a possibility to avoid the so many disadvantages and traps of capitalism: there is a chance to create a workshop for newer-type solution of the common problems on Earth.

6. Reality. In the Eastern block countries people for 40 (70) years were living in an experimental society. The experiment was not successful, and now it does not seem to be very perspective to begin with another experiment, first of all, that eastern people can compare the domestic level of life with the material circumstances of some developed countries. Sociologically understandable this argument: first we would like to achieve the level of the existing developed nations, and only after begin with new attempts.

7.Expectation: Logically we can see that this argument is not correct, it is impossible that the whole world (India, China etc. six billion people) would follow the Western consumption model, but still there is an illusion that at least the European countries, or at least the "three" (Poland-Czechoslovakia-Hungary) or at least we alone can jump into the club of the developed countries.

Part of this illusion is a kind of myth of the market together with earlier illusions and simplifications. By that the root of all problem is because the Soviet army was here, because of the one-party system, because of the planned economy.

7.Reality. As these pillars one-by-one collapsed we had to realise that it is not enough. What remained that is a structurally well embedded way of thinking and systems of conditions. There was an even bigger surprise, that to "overcome" these conditions for the politicians there appeared patterns, visions and sights of a more remote post feudal past: and these can bring us rather even more far from what we call Europe but not closer.

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